

## Miscellanea

# Green College, Oxford: its contribution to clinical medicine

RICHARD DOLL

The establishment of Green College on 1 September 1979 is the most recent of a series of developments that have accompanied the recovery of Oxford medicine from its nadir in the middle of the nineteenth century, when on average only two BMs were awarded each year. The idea of establishing a college that would have a special concern for clinical medicine arose early in the 1970s, when plans were laid for increasing the size of the clinical school, so that it could accept as many students as the preclinical school graduated. It is doubtful, however, whether a new college would have been considered had it not been for two other factors: the difficulty of finding college associations for the large number of clinical teachers in the expanded school and the availability of the old Radcliffe Observatory, which would no longer be needed for research laboratories when the second phase of the new John Radcliffe Hospital was completed. My own close connection with the College, as Warden since its inception, sadly ends next year with my retirement, when Professor Sir John Walton will succeed me.

### Radcliffe Observatory

Described by Pevsner as "architecturally the finest observatory in Europe" the old Radcliffe Observatory has had a chequered history. It was built at the earnest request of Dr Thomas Hornsby, Savilian Professor of Astronomy, who was unable to find a room that could accommodate the large instruments that were becoming available in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Duke of Marlborough provided the land and the Radcliffe Trustees the money; the building work was started in 1772 to a design of Henry Keene's surveyor to Westminster Abbey and architect of Worcester College. Keene died, however, in 1776 and was succeeded by James Wyatt, the most celebrated architect of the time. Wyatt modified the design and modelled the second floor of the building on the "Tower of the Winds" in Athens, thus giving it its present familiar name. The cost, not surprisingly, mounted and as the Trustees would allow an expenditure of only £1000 a year the building was not completed until 1794, a few years before Hornsby died. Early in the nineteenth century the Radcliffe Trustees quarrelled with the University, which they thought had appointed a professor of astronomy who was not a practical man, and they appointed an independent "observer" and kept the building in their own hands. One hundred years later it had ceased to be of much use as an observatory and in 1930 Lord Nuffield prevailed on the Trustees to sell him the estate on which it stood, which he proceeded to divide between the University and the governors of the neighbouring Radcliffe Infirmary. The Observatory itself, the Observer's House, and three acres of garden went to the University on the understanding that the Observatory would

be used as laboratories for the Nuffield Institute for Medical Research, and it served this function until the Institute was rehoused in new buildings near the new hospital and designed specifically for research. Meanwhile, the Observer's House became the base for social activities for the clinical students and was known as Osler House.

### Cecil and Ida Green

The freeing of the Observatory created an unparalleled opportunity, and in September 1975 the faculty of clinical medicine submitted proposals for a new college to be based in its grounds, with promises of financial help from the E P Abraham Educational Trust, the Radcliffe Trust, the Rhodes Trust, and Blackwell Scientific Publications. These proposals were finally accepted by the University after the astonishingly short period of 14 months, and it was agreed to establish the college "on a date to be decided by Council." One of the conditions laid down was that no building would be erected on the grounds the top of which subtended an angle of more than  $22\frac{1}{2}^\circ$  with the rain gauge in the gardens that had provided daily readings for longer than any other in the country.

At this stage Drs Cecil and Ida Green appeared on the scene, listened to the proposals, and within three days (on 7 April 1977) offered to give the University one million pounds, later raised to nearly two million, on condition that the contract for starting the work was let by the end of the year. Cecil Green is one of the most remarkable men of his generation in the United States. Born in England in 1900 he was taken by his parents to Canada at the age of 2. After studying at the University of British Columbia he took a higher degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and applied his scientific skills to exploring for oil. These led to his becoming president of Geophysical Services Incorporated and, incidentally, owing to a change in direction during the war, to being one of the five founders of Texas Instruments. Cecil and his wife, Ida, have devoted themselves in recent years to encouraging new ideas in education, science, and medicine, and in November 1978 they were honoured at a dinner in Washington by representatives of 20 universities throughout the world, in which they had established professorships or financed the construction of new academic departments. Cecil Green still lives at the growing edge of science and is at present personally organising conferences on new methods of biological imaging. Unlike some scientists, however, his horizon extends beyond the confines of his own subject and he emphasises the need for young scientists to study languages and arts along with their chosen subject.

### Aims and achievements

Green College accepted its first students in September 1979 when building work was still in progress. It was completed in the summer of 1981, when it was formally opened by the

Oxford University, Oxford

SIR RICHARD DOLL, OBE, FRCS, FRCP, warden of Green College and previously regius professor of medicine

Chancellor of the University, the Rt Hon Harold Macmillan. By this time the Observatory had been converted to provide common rooms, dining hall and kitchens, library, and music room; and residential accommodation had been made available in or near the College for 55 single and 12 married students.

The College's special concern for clinical medicine is now reflected academically in the high proportion of its fellows who are members of the clinical faculty (at present about two-thirds), in the large number of the hospital teaching staff who are members of its common room, and in the lectures, seminars, and symposia that are held in its premises. It has sought, moreover, to further the interests of the clinical students in the University as a whole, irrespective of the colleges to which they belong, by purchasing a house in the grounds of the new hospital for the use of the students—now known as William Osler House—and by allocating a substantial proportion of its income from clinical students' fees for the maintenance of the house and the support of the students' club.

There is, however, danger in narrow specialisation, and Green College has sought to enrich its academic life by extending membership to teachers and students in other faculties whose interests border on and sometimes overlap those of clinical medicine. The students, however, are limited to graduates to make them comparable with the clinical students who, in Oxford (as in Cambridge), have previously taken an honours degree in some non-clinical subject. With this in mind a special effort has been made to attract students taking the MSc course in applied social studies with a view to becoming social workers in the hope that by mixing together in the college common rooms and attending joint seminars men and women who are going to be doctors or social workers will come to understand and

respect the complementary nature of work in the two fields. In addition, individuals are admitted to membership (as fellows, research fellows, or students) who are working in a wide range of physical, biological, and social subjects.

Not surprisingly perhaps, in view of its origins, the College has been acutely aware of the need for universities to involve themselves more directly in the industrial life of the country, on which the welfare of the whole community depends. With this in mind visiting fellows have been elected from the nominees of pharmaceutical and other firms with biological interests. As yet it is too early to know what this is going to mean in practice; but hopefully it will lead to the development of research programmes of mutual interest as well as providing a source of topics for joint discussion.

The three years of the College's existence have seen a steady growth from a small beginning. Its membership now includes 38 fellows, nine research fellows, and 95 students. There is still room for some expansion, but the College plans to remain small. It has already shown that it is capable of being a focus for clinical medicine in Oxford which can provide an attractive base for visiting scholars, and it would probably be unwise for it to grow much larger. It has also awakened an interest in clinical medicine in other colleges, and most likely it will best serve the interests of the subject by setting an example rather than by attempting to consolidate all work in clinical medicine under one collegiate roof. Experience has shown too that the Oxford tradition of mixing disciplines is as valid now as it ever was in the past and that those concerned with clinical medicine have much to learn from experts in other fields.

The illustration on the cover is of Green College.

## The Barsestshire doctors

DAVID WALDRON SMITHERS

There were in Barchester, at the time of which I write, a number of doctors, good, bad, and imported. Miss Thorne's opinion was that they were not what they used to be; once she had thought the doctors were talented, observing, educated men but she feared that now any whippersnapper out of an apothecary shop could call himself a doctor. Opinion on this matter varied in the county, but it was clear that some of the doctors shared Miss Thorne's opinion about their colleagues. There were, indeed, some medical disagreements so violent that on one occasion it was said that there was war in Barsestshire.

### Well-intentioned interference

When John Bold put up his plate it was to the great disgust of the nine local practitioners (soon to be reduced to five, not counting old Scalpen the retired apothecary and tooth-drawer) who were already trying to get a living out of the bishop, dean, and canons. They had no cause for anxiety, at least on their own account, for in the first three years John Bold took but three fees. John's father had been a successful physician in London

and had purchased property in Barchester: The Dragon of Wantly inn and posting-house, four shops in the High Street, and a moiety of the new row of genteel villas just beyond Hiram's Hospital. John had been trained at a London teaching hospital and returned to Barchester when his father died and left him the property. Instead of applying his considerable energy and undoubted ability to medicine, however, he fancied himself as a strong reformer, became a town councillor, and set out to deal with all abuses—State abuses, church abuses, corporation abuses, abuses in medical practice, and general abuses in the world at large. The consequences resulting from reforming drive and political ambition in young doctors have been known to give cause for concern in more recent times. John Bold's activities so worried three consecutive mayors that it became somewhat difficult to find a fourth.

It followed that this energetic young man was not much loved in Barchester despite his sincere endeavour to mend mankind in ways other than those in which he had been trained. Archdeacon Grantly went so far, on one occasion, when speaking to the precentor, as to announce that he had a holy horror of this impious demagogue. John Bold, however, was brave, eager, amusing, well-made, confiding, manly, young, and enterprising as well as good-looking and, having a sufficient income to support a wife, was, not unnaturally, loved by Eleanor Harding the precentor's younger daughter.

Dr Bold, in common with some other improvers, did not know when it would be wise to restrain his reforming zeal and, after a success concerned with allegedly false charges imposed by an old

Knockholt, Kent TN14 7JE

SIR DAVID WALDRON SMITHERS, MD, FRCP, retired professor of radiotherapy